



Greenville Sister Cities International, Inc.

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News Release

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Greenville Sister Cities Delegation Receives Warm Welcome in Kortrijk and Bergamo

On October 4, carrying gifts, program exchange ideas, and the good wishes of Greenville City Council, a delegation from Greenville Sister Cities set off on a six-day visit to sister cities Kortrijk, Belgium and Bergamo, Italy with the purpose of strengthening ties and developing new program exchanges between cities.

According to City Council Member Deb Sofield, who represented City Council on the visit, the trip was a great success. "The mayors and their administrations opened their doors to us," she said. "They filled our days with tours and receptions and gave us the chance to meet with representatives in the fields of education, the arts and government. It was a valuable exchange."

Two years ago, a delegation from Bergamo, Italy visited Greenville; a trip that sparked a revitalized energy for Greenville Sister Cities. Since that time, Greenville acquired a third sister city in Tianjin Free Trade Zone China and began developing partnership opportunities with all three sister cities. One result of their efforts was this recent visit to the two European sister cities and the chance to explore new program ideas with them.

"We discussed proposals for a number of visual art exchanges between cities," said Upstate Visual Arts Association Director Alison Gray. "And they were very receptive to our ideas." She said projects proposed included art exchanges between Bob Jones University Art Museum and Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, sending local artists for the Artisphere festival, high school class-to-class interchanges, and a top quality photo exhibition involving all three cities.

Doug Stevens, president of Greenville Sister Cities said that the organization is also working to foster stronger economic ties between sister cities. “The mayor of Bergamo told me he was very impressed with Greenville’s transformation from a textile-based economy to a diverse, international business center. A direction he’d like to explore for his city,” he noted.

The Greenville delegation included members of the Greenville Sister Cities International (GSCI) Board of Directors along with GSCI members with interests in education, the arts and humanities. The delegation members were Douglas Stevens, president of Greenville Sister Cities International, Donna Lohr, vice president of GSCI, Dr. Donald Beckie, president of the S.C. Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Dr. Maurice Cherry, professor of modern languages at Furman University, Alison Gray, administrative director of the Upstate Visual Arts Association, Joyce Moore, founding board member of GSCI, Jean Stevens, Carolyn Beckie, Bill Lohr, Mary Vause, and Dr. John and Karen Humeniuk.

“Everyone who made the trip is now eager to get the program exchanges up and running,” said Doug Stevens. “To do this we need to involve more members of the Greenville community in our Greenville Sister Cities programs. We invite all those interested to join us.”

Those interested in learning more about Greenville Sister Cities can visit the website at http://www.greatergreenville.com/city_government/sister_city.htm or contact city liaison Candace Sommer at 467-4470.

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Greenville Sister Cities is a member of Sister Cities International, a non-profit citizen diplomacy network creating and strengthening partnerships between U.S. and international communities in an effort to increase global cooperation at the municipal level, to promote cultural understanding and to stimulate economic development. SCI leads the movement for local community development and volunteer action by motivating and empowering local citizens, municipal officials and business leaders to conduct long-term programs of mutual benefit.